# Nearly 5% of London Underground journeys evade fares, costing TfL £130m and sparking violence against staff



Amidst a burgeoning crisis on the London Underground, recent figures reveal that nearly one in 20 passengers are evading fares, costing Transport for London (TfL) an estimated £130 million annually. This alarming statistic highlights not only the financial burden on the transport system but also the rising tide of violence against staff who attempt to curb this illicit behaviour.

With fare evasion now representing approximately 5% of Tube journeys, the increasing frequency of these offences comes at a time when the cost-of-living crisis is squeezing many Londoners. Shadow Justice Secretary Robert Jenrick recently took to the Underground to confront fare dodgers directly, asserting, “It’s annoying watching so many people break the law and get away with it.” His efforts, however, were met with hostility, including verbal abuse and even threats of violence, reflecting the precarious environment faced by TfL employees.

The implications of fare evasion extend far beyond lost revenue. TfL, in releasing its annual statistics, confirmed that nearly half of the 10,493 reports of work-related violence and aggression in 2023/24 were directly linked to fare evasion incidents. Siwan Hayward, TfL’s Director of Security, Policing and Enforcement, articulated the dangers frontline staff endure, indicating that over 50% of cases of workplace violence are triggered by confrontations over unpaid fares. Incidents of racial abuse among staff have also come to light, compounding the challenges in maintaining a safe working environment.

In a concerted effort to combat this issue, TfL has recently deployed additional enforcement measures, including the introduction of 500 new enforcement officers across the network. These strategies follow an alarming trend of violence, including incidents involving knives. British Transport Police reported over 480 cases of individuals carrying bladed weapons throughout the past year, highlighting a serious public safety concern. Dr Leroy Logan, a former Superintendent in the Metropolitan Police, noted the reluctance of staff to challenge fare evaders due to fears of assault and underscored the necessity for high-visibility patrols as a deterrent.

Despite ongoing law enforcement efforts, the broader socio-economic factors contributing to fare evasion cannot be overlooked. The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, acknowledged that increasing living costs exacerbate the problem, stating that higher fares drive individuals to evade payments, further straining the system. Manny Hothi, Chief Executive of Trust for London, remarked, “There’s no excuse for fare-dodging, but the rise in it points to a wider problem,” referencing the increasing financial pressures faced by many residents.

TfL has made clear that fare evasion is not a victimless crime; the lost revenue significantly impacts service reliability and safety. In response to this financial drain, the organisation has announced new initiatives aimed at reducing fare evasion rates to under 1.5% by 2030. This ambitious goal includes raising penalty fares from £80 to £100 and expanding the number of investigators focusing on persistent offenders. In 2022, TfL prosecuted 19,614 individuals for fare evasion—a staggering 56% increase from the previous year—demonstrating the heightened urgency of the crackdown.

As the reality of fare evasion continues to unfold, the challenge lies not only in rectifying the immediate issues of financial loss and safety concerns but also in addressing the underlying societal pressures that compel individuals to bypass fares in the first place. TfL’s ongoing response will need to balance enforcement with a sensitivity to the broader economic landscape, striking a careful chord between public safety and accessibility in a city grappling with escalating living costs.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-fare-dodging-tube-london-b2745785.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-fare-dodging-tube-london-b2745785.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-fare-dodging-tube-london-b2745785.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-fare-dodging-tube-london-b2745785.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-fare-dodging-tube-london-b2745785.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-fare-dodging-tube-london-b2745785.html), [[3]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2025/april/tfl-introduces-new-measures-to-halve-fare-evasion-across-all-tfl-services)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2025/april/tfl-introduces-new-measures-to-halve-fare-evasion-across-all-tfl-services), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/tfl-transport-london-tube-underground-buses-fare-dodging-enforcement-evasion-b1175002.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/february/tfl-rolls-out-tougher-action-on-fare-evaders-and-staff-abuse-with-increased-penalty-fares-and-body-worn-cameras), [[5]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/march/higher-penalty-fares-on-tfl-services-to-reduce-fare-evasion-and-ensure-consistency-across-transport-networks)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-fare-dodging-tube-london-b2745785.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-fare-dodging-tube-london-b2745785.html), [[4]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/february/tfl-rolls-out-tougher-action-on-fare-evaders-and-staff-abuse-with-increased-penalty-fares-and-body-worn-cameras)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2025/april/tfl-introduces-new-measures-to-halve-fare-evasion-across-all-tfl-services), [[4]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/february/tfl-rolls-out-tougher-action-on-fare-evaders-and-staff-abuse-with-increased-penalty-fares-and-body-worn-cameras), [[5]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/march/higher-penalty-fares-on-tfl-services-to-reduce-fare-evasion-and-ensure-consistency-across-transport-networks)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-fare-dodging-tube-london-b2745785.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-fare-dodging-tube-london-b2745785.html> - An article from The Independent reports that nearly 5% of London Underground passengers evade fares, costing Transport for London (TfL) £130 million annually. The piece highlights increased violence against staff confronting fare dodgers, with almost half of the 10,493 reported incidents in 2023/24 linked to fare evasion. Shadow Justice Secretary Robert Jenrick is mentioned as actively addressing the issue, and TfL's efforts to reduce fare evasion are discussed.
3. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2025/april/tfl-introduces-new-measures-to-halve-fare-evasion-across-all-tfl-services> - Transport for London (TfL) has announced a new strategy to halve fare evasion across all services by 2030. The plan includes expanding the team of professional investigators to target prolific offenders and deploying over 500 uniformed officers across the network. TfL aims to reduce the current fare evasion rate of 3.4% to below 1.5% by 2030, addressing the £130 million annual revenue loss due to fare evasion.
4. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/february/tfl-rolls-out-tougher-action-on-fare-evaders-and-staff-abuse-with-increased-penalty-fares-and-body-worn-cameras> - TfL has implemented stricter measures against fare evasion and staff abuse, including increasing penalty fares from £80 to £100 and equipping frontline staff with body-worn cameras. In 2023, TfL prosecuted 19,614 individuals for fare evasion, a 56% increase from 2022. The organisation emphasises that fare evasion is a criminal offence and a significant contributor to work-related violence and aggression towards staff.
5. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/march/higher-penalty-fares-on-tfl-services-to-reduce-fare-evasion-and-ensure-consistency-across-transport-networks> - TfL has raised the penalty fare for fare evasion from £80 to £100, aligning with the Department for Transport's decision to increase penalty fares across National Rail. This move aims to deter fare evasion and ensure consistency across transport networks. In 2023, TfL prosecuted 19,614 individuals for fare evasion, a 56% increase from 2022, and investigated 421 habitual offenders who made over 50,000 irregular journeys on the Underground network.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/tfl-transport-london-tube-underground-buses-fare-dodging-enforcement-evasion-b1175002.html> - An article from The Standard reports that TfL spent nearly £22 million on cracking down on fare dodging across the Tube and bus network over the last year but collected only £1.3 million in penalty charges. Despite this, fare evasion across all TfL services fell slightly from 3.9% in 2022/23 to 3.8% in 2023/24, with total journeys rising by 300 million.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2945435zyo> - A BBC News article reports that TfL spent nearly £22 million on cracking down on fare dodging across the Tube and bus network over the last year, collecting £1.3 million in penalty charges. Despite this, fare evasion across all TfL services fell slightly from 3.9% in 2022/23 to 3.8% in 2023/24, with total journeys rising by 300 million.